

DATE: February 15, 1977

To : Clayton Rich
Dean, Medical School

FROM : Joshua Lederberg
Department of Genetics

SUBJECT: Further remarks on interdisciplinary integration at SUMS.

Dear Clay,

I did have the following thought: with rare exceptions the graduate students at this medical school get little information from their environment - except bumping into patients at the cafeteria - that they are working in a health oriented institution. If we could organize some system of voluntary preceptorships, whereby a graduate student could spend, say, half-time for 6 months or the equivalent in the laboratory of a young clinical investigator,* and with the further opportunity to have a glimpse of the clinical culture, I think there would be benefits to all parties concerned. Such students would also be the most efficient mediators of the bridges among faculty that we had also discussed.

Basic science departments that already have training grants may find this even a credit as far as their appreciation by NIH is concerned. Similar provisions would of course have been built in to the cancer biology training grant. For some other departments - and I think of Medical Microbiology as being in particularly difficult straits - it may be important to try to start the precedent that the clinical department can provide some of the modest funds needed for this activity. With rare exceptions, I did not have in mind that the graduate student would do his dissertation work in the framework of this program but rather that it would take the place of, for example, experience as a teaching assistant, especially for those students who look forward to an academic career in medical institutions.

I think a substantial proportion if not a majority of graduate students would welcome such an opportunity.

In the long run I would think that an experience extended on these lines would be a more satisfactory program than the combined M.D.-Ph.D. but that is hardly a point we are in a position to decide on our own at the present time.

Sincerely yours,

John.

* Generally I think this would be more productive than the course, except - of course - where the research objective tells otherwise.

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